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The Palimpsest

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH
Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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Jim Jackson's Raid

Sylvester Hubbartt was returning from Mt. Sterling, where he had gone on business the day before. Thoughts of his recent transactions, local gossip, news of the war, and consciousness of the familiar view of the countryside filled his mind as he rode along that fresh October morning in 1864. Unfenced fields and prairie stretched away on either side of the roadway. Some of the corn had already been cut and shocked, revealing a wealth of yellow pumpkins and exposing the rendezvous of quail and prairie chickens. Farm houses in pleasant groves dotted the southern Iowa landscape.

Just beyond Upton, he observed an unusual group of a dozen or fifteen horsemen galloping westward. From a distance they appeared to be clad in blue uniforms, although some peculiarities of their costumes were evident. Thinking that they were Union cavalrymen home on a furlough, Mr. Hub-

bartt spurred forward to overtake them and learn the latest news from the front. Suddenly three or four of the men drew up at a farm lot, caught a horse, saddled it, turned one of their own horses loose, and galloped away to overtake the main band.

Suspicious of such actions, Mr. Hubbartt kept well in the rear and decided to restrain his curiosity about the progress of the war. He was further surprised when the whole band stopped at the home of his friend, John Brumley, in Davis County. A few of the men went into the house, but reappeared in a few minutes and all rode away.

When Mr. Hubbartt arrived he found that the house had been ransacked. Mr. Brumley, who was laid up at the time with a broken leg, could offer no resistance. After breaking a gun, the bandits had ordered Mrs. Brumley to open a trunk belonging to her sister. She had protested that she could not open it, but when they threatened to break it open she unlocked it. The trunk was full of clothing which was thrown out on the bed. A pocket book containing eighty dollars that was concealed among the clothes had escaped the notice of the robbers.

Who were these heavily-armed and well-mounted marauders? When some one asked, the leader gave the laconic answer, "Price's Hell Hounds". Bent upon raiding the homes of loyal Iowans, their principal purpose seemed to be to rob and kill men who had served in the Union army. Apparently they were Confederate soldiers or southern sympathizers

in disguise, and not ordinary highwaymen. "James Jackson", the leader, bold, impertinent, unscrupulous, and pitiless, held absolute sway over his band and proceeded in the execution of his well-planned raid with amazing precision.

From Brumley's house the raiders went to the home of Mr. Gustin. A part of their number entered the house, robbed him of a gun, which they broke, a favorite watch, and about one hundred and sixty dollars in money. Meanwhile another portion of the gang proceeded to William Downing's place where they broke his gun, robbed him of what money he had, and took him prisoner.

Thence the cavalcade rode on northwest to the residence of John Heckathier, but obtained no money as Mr. Heckathier was not at home. The leader asked Mrs. Heckathier if those people (pointing to Thomas Miller's residence a few rods south) had any money and she said she did not know. "We'll find out", was his only comment as he started away with one of his men.

It was between nine and ten o'clock in the morning. Mr. Miller had gone to the field and his wife was ironing when Jim Jackson pushed open the kitchen door and stepped into the room. Tall and straight he was, with a handsome face, fair complexion, light brown hair, and blue eyes. He was dressed in the uniform of a Union soldier and an officer's sword hung at his side. But he must have been an eccentric fellow for he wore a lady's hat

with a broad brim adorned with blue ribbons that streamed down his back. Astonished by the sudden appearance and peculiar aspect of the stranger, Mrs. Miller regarded him critically as he glanced about the room.

"Where is the gun?" he asked, nodding toward the empty brackets on the wall.

"By what authority are you here making such a demand", challenged Mrs. Miller.

"Lincoln's", he replied.

"Pooh", she said, contemptuously.

But again the man asked about the gun in such a manner that Mrs. Miller realized she must give an answer.

"We have no gun. We didn't need it and traded it for a sleigh."

"Then where is your money?" he demanded.

"It's gone with the gun", she responded.

But the guerrilla was not to be so easily satisfied. Threatening to burn the house if he found any money, he began to search the place. Mrs. Miller told him if he got any money he would have to hunt it. Thoroughly frightened by this conduct, the oldest daughter rushed to the cradle to save the year-old baby, but Mrs. Miller told her to put the baby back as the man was not going to burn the house. In a bureau drawer he found a hundred and ten dollars. Mrs. Miller tried to seize it, but the raider was too quick for her and put the money in his pocket.

"We need that money and it will do you no good", pleaded Mrs. Miller. But Jackson only looked at her and said nothing. In a moment he left the house. Mrs. Miller followed, walking at his side and insisting that he would suffer for what he did. Her protests were ignored and in a moment the raiders were gone.

At Chris Wagler's house they got no money, but they broke his shotgun, a fine one that he had brought from the old country. Passing on north to the place where the Pleasant Knoll schoolhouse now stands, they turned directly west toward the residence of Henry Blough where they obtained only twenty-five copper pennies and some silver coins belonging to a little boy. When the boy objected to the robbery the guerrilla leader drew his revolver and made the little fellow give him his pocket knife also.

As Martin Kays drove north on his way to Pulaski with a wagon-load of eggs he had bought from farmers he noticed the group of horsemen riding up behind him. Just after he had passed Blough's house, the raiders turned in and from their actions he suspected that they were outlaws. In preparation for possible emergencies he took a roll of money from his pocket and pushed it down in a box of oats which he used for packing eggs. It was well he did so for his apprehensions were soon fulfilled. Two or three of the raiders overtook him and ordered him to stop. After looking over his team the spokes-

man ordered that one of the horses be unhitched. While one of the men threw the harness off on the ground and transferred the saddle from his own horse to the new acquisition, the leader demanded Mr. Kays's pocket book which was handed over without apparent hesitation. The purse contained only a small amount of change. "You've spent most of your money?" questioned the bandit, and Mr. Kays assented. Whereupon the three men returned to Blough's to join the rest of the gang.

Having harnessed the jaded horse that was left by the guerrillas, Mr. Kays hitched it to his wagon. He had gone only a short distance, however, when he found that he had been cheated in the trade, but reconciled himself with the thought that such was always the case in a one-sided deal. Never for a moment did he entertain the idea of trying to make the fellow trade back. Even so he fared much better than many of the others who came in contact with the outlaws, because he had concealed most of his money in the oats and the stolen horse later returned to him.

Mr. Kays drove on to Pulaski as fast as his team could travel and reported his experience with the guerrillas. Immediately the citizens began to prepare for defense. Every man, woman, and child that could handle a gun prepared for battle. The excitement was intense, for the destination of the raiders seemed apparent to everybody. The men loaded guns for the boys and women. All were de-

termined to defend their village to the last ditch. John F. Scarborough, an attorney in Bloomfield, then a boy about nine years old, remembers that he proudly wore his brother's military cap on the eve of the impending battle. But the guerrillas never came to Pulaski.

About half a mile south of Blough's place was the home of William Power. Two sons, Albert and Wallace, had enlisted in the Union army, but the fall of 1864 found Wallace at home on leave of absence because of sickness. While Mr. Power and Wallace were working near the road on the forenoon of October 12th they saw three men ride up to the front gate.

"Wallace, there are some of your soldier friends coming to see you", remarked Mr. Power, whereupon Wallace went out to the gate to meet them. As he approached they drew their revolvers, dismounted, climbed over the fence, and the leader ordered Wallace to take off his uniform.

It was apparent that they were not his friends, but being unarmed and powerless he took off his uniform and handed it over. Mr. Power, seeing what had happened, turned away. One of the men ordered him to halt, but finding no convenient place to stop he kept on going. Upon reaching the protection of a large corn shock he threw his pocket book into it and started hastily down over the hill. The guerrilla fired at him but missed.

Mrs. Power, alarmed at the shot, came to see what

the trouble was. When she inquired who they were and by what authority they came there, they claimed to be Union soldiers, but she assured them that Union soldiers did not act that way. They then told her they were "Jim Jackson's Dare Devils" and asked her if she had ever seen them before.

Marching Wallace to the barn, they announced that they would kill him unless his father came back. In order to terrify him the more they told him they would kill him in the presence of his mother, to which he replied that they had the power to kill him and if they intended to do so he would rather die in the presence of his mother than any other person. When a younger son informed Mr. Power of Wallace's plight he came back. Having broken Mr. Power's gun, they ordered him and Wallace to mount a barebacked horse, and thus awkwardly situated, riding double and Wallace clad only in his underclothes, they started rapidly in pursuit of the other guerrillas, one desperado on each side of the prisoners and another behind. The bandits got no money from Power, because his running off consumed so much time that they did not search the house.

From Power's the raiders increased their speed, moving westward as fast as their horses could travel in a body. While the main group remained intact, details made short sorties on either side, visiting farm houses, robbing men, and breaking every firearm they found. As their ranks were swelled

by several prisoners, people who saw them dashing across the unfenced fields and prairie assumed that all were guerrillas. Estimates of the number varied in exaggeration. Plundering the loyal Iowans and capturing every Union soldier they encountered, the raiders hastened on their way. The homes of David Baughman, Perry Brown, Reese, Daniel Swartzendrover, Jacob King, and Jeremiah Miller were visited in rapid succession. For some reason William Millsap was not molested. Overtaking James Brown, formerly of Company B, Thirtieth Iowa Infantry, they ordered him to "fall in", a term which he understood and obeyed with alacrity if not with cheerfulness. The sound of drums, beaten by some boys and old men of Roscoe Township, convinced the marauders that a posse was being raised to pursue them. As a matter of fact most of the citizens of the community had gone to the county fair at Bloomfield fifteen or sixteen miles away. The suddenness of the unexpected raid, the Union garb of the raiders, and the destruction of all the guns they found rendered their victims practically helpless. Before the neighbors could be called they were gone.

David Gibson, who was making molasses near Miller's, observed the strange horsemen and, determining that they were bushwhackers, mounted a horse and hastened to Bloomfield to give the alarm. Other couriers followed and excitement grew apace. According to one rumor the invaders numbered a

hundred and fifty. The fair broke up, while every one rushed to the defense of the town. "All was hurry, bustle, and confusion." In anticipation of an attack upon Bloomfield men were posted on house tops as lookouts.

In the midst of the turmoil a voice was heard calling for Colonel James B. Weaver, late of the Second Iowa Infantry, to take command of the militia. As the shout of approval went up, Colonel Weaver undertook the organization of a company to pursue and punish the ruffians. Horses were taken from carriages and wagons without reference to the owners. It was late in the afternoon when preparations were completed. Leaving the defense of Bloomfield in charge of Colonel S. A. Moore and several other seasoned veterans, Colonel Weaver and his volunteers set out on the trail of the raiders who were fully twenty miles away and riding fast.

Meanwhile, the guerrillas had proceeded with their nefarious business. The prisoners were formed in line and each was invited to join the band. All declined except one whom they had captured in Missouri, whereupon he was given Wallace Power's uniform, boots, and socks. Jackson then delivered a short speech and ended by asking if every one was satisfied. All answered promptly in the affirmative except William Power who hesitated. Wallace, schooled in the cruelties of war and well aware of the consequences, prompted his father to assent. Having extorted a pledge from each never to join

the Union army, Jackson dismissed all of the prisoners except Wallace Power, James Brown, and the new recruit.

Relieved of most of their prisoners, the raiders continued their pillaging. From James Paris they stole a horse, a revolver, and a watch, but they scorned the sixty cents they found at William Sterritt's house. Finding that L. D. Hotchkiss had no money they helped themselves to what they wanted in the kitchen, broke his gun, and hurried on to plunder the home of Frank French, where they obtained some military clothing. Morris McCracken and his son, a member of Company G, Forty-fifth Iowa Infantry, had a narrow escape. The guerrillas noticed the son's uniform and asked if he had been in the army. He replied that the uniform belonged to his brother who was at the fair, so the robbers contented themselves with stealing eighty dollars and breaking his gun. Though Mr. Haney's house was thoroughly searched and considerable damage done no money was found and the marauders hastened on to enrich themselves at the expense of Thomas Hardy, reputed to be the principal money-lender in the southern part of Davis County.

A diligent search, however, failed to reveal any money, although eight hundred dollars lay in the folds of an old day book which they had thrown on the floor. Failure to get money there seemed to vex the guerrilla leader more than any other event that occurred on the raid. Perhaps the robbery of

Thomas Hardy was one of the chief motives of the expedition. At any rate his house seemed to be their most distant objective in Iowa, for thereafter the raiders turned southward again. Indeed, it is probable that this point was the farthest north that any Confederate forces reached during the war. Certainly it is several miles farther north than John H. Morgan went on his famous raid into Ohio.

About two hundred yards south of the house the guerrillas met Mr. Hardy and his hired man riding on a load of wood. Jackson ordered them to halt.

"How old are your horses?" he asked.

"Five years old", said Mr. Hardy.

"Get out and unhitch them, I want them", ordered the guerrilla.

In an equally firm tone Mr. Hardy replied, "I want them, too. You don't intend to take them without paying me for them?"

"Oh yes, I'll pay you for them", the bandit growled as he drew his revolver and fired.

The shot took effect near the right eye and the wounded man fell off the wagon. Placing his hands over the wound from which blood gushed between his fingers, he staggered to his feet exclaiming, "God have mercy! God have mercy!" and sank to the ground.

With a fiendish purpose, the ruffian dismounted, drew a small pistol from his belt, and standing over the prostrate form of the dying man, took deliberate aim. But the shot did not have the desired effect.

Muttering a curse between his clenched teeth, the bandit replaced the weapon, drew a heavy Colt's navy revolver and fired again. In Mr. Hardy's pockets he found about four hundred dollars which he took and remounted his horse. He then ordered the hired man to unhitch the horses, but they were not taken. When one of the men asked why he had killed the man, the villain answered: "Because he did not mind me. I will kill any man who refuses to obey me."

Meanwhile, three or four of the raiders went to meet a man coming toward them with a team and wagon. Their errand was eminently successful for they obtained five hundred dollars which they put in a cartridge box and coolly asked the man for cigars. They told him that the captain would soon be there and that he must do whatever he was told, and do it quickly. When Jackson came up and was told that the money had already been taken, he ordered the man to unhitch the horses.

"Do they pace?" he inquired.

"No sir."

"Then I don't want 'em, I have better horses. Take off that halter."

"Which one?"

"The one on the bay."

The man handed the halter to the raider, who then ordered him to hitch up his horses and drive to the house, where he would find a dead man to take care of, and not to leave there until morning.

The guerrillas next stopped at the house of Eleazer Small, a soldier of Company A, Third Iowa Cavalry. Mr. Small was just leaving the farm when he saw the group approaching and, thinking they were Union soldiers, went up to his gate to meet them. The leader rode up and asked him a few questions concerning what part of the army he had served in, dismounted, and without the slightest warning drew his revolver and shot him in the face. Another shot took effect in the breast, and as Mr. Small fell to the ground a third ball pierced his neck. The dead man's pockets were searched and what money he had was taken. The murderer then stooped and pinned to his coat a slip of paper bearing the inscription: "James Jackson, Lieutenant Commanding, October 12th, 1864."

P. H. Bence, captain of the Thirtieth Iowa Infantry, was at home on a furlough in the little town of Springville. As the raiders rode into town, Jackson called Captain Bence to him, asked him what regiment he belonged to, and ordered him to take off his uniform.

"What does this mean," asked Captain Bence, surprised at the command. "Aren't you Union soldiers?"

The guerrilla leader then informed him that they were not, and inasmuch as he was a soldier they intended to kill him.

Captain Bence coolly responded, "I see that I am within your power and request you not to kill me

here in the presence of my family." The guerrilla put his revolver away and demanded the captain's money which amounted to eight hundred dollars. Ordering one of his men to see that Captain Bence changed his clothes, he went into the house and asked Mrs. Bence if she had any money. She hesitated to answer, but Captain Bence, coming into the room at this time, told her to get the fifty dollars he had given her that morning.

"Is that all?" Jackson inquired, and she replied that it was.

He announced that he was going to see for himself and if he found any more money he would burn the house. He went to the bed and turned down the pillow, but found nothing and immediately returned to his horse.

News of the outlaws' depredations had reached Springville a short time before their arrival, and several militiamen were preparing to resist the invaders. Three or four horses were tied to a fence. These were seized and William Hill, Joseph Hill, and Andrew Tannehill were captured. Just as David Sanderson, who was collecting firearms, stepped out of an old wood-house carrying three guns he was confronted by one of the mounted guerrillas who pointed his revolver and ordered him to throw down the guns. Mr. Sanderson obeyed and was taken to join the other prisoners.

The bandit chief demanded Joseph Hill's money, and when he replied that he had none ordered him

to turn his pockets inside out, which revealed only a pocket knife.

"Throw it away", commanded the raider. Hill tossed it aside.

"Hadn't I better shoot him because he didn't throw it farther?" suggested the leader to one of his men, but receiving no response he turned to the horses and ordered the prisoners to mount. Captain Bence and David Sanderson were placed upon the same horse and all rode away.

They had not gone far when they met Will Losey and inquired of him if he had heard of any rebels being in the country. Losey, who was carrying a rifle, replied that he had and was then on his way to Springville and Savannah to give the alarm.

"We are the rebels", said Jackson, "and you fall in line."

Astounded by this announcement, Losey hesitated, but the click of a revolver and the advice from the prisoners settled the matter and he also "fell in". Having broken his gun and robbed him of sixty-four dollars, the raiders passed on to the house of Lieutenant William Niblick of Company D, Third Iowa Cavalry, whom they robbed of a saber, uniform, and thirty dollars in money.

"Don't you think you ought to be killed?" inquired the guerrilla chief.

"No, I don't think I ought to be killed", replied Mr. Niblick. "I have done my duty to my country." No one knows why his life was spared.

The sun was sinking behind the western hills as the band of outlaws crossed the border into Missouri. In the timber and hollows shadows deepened rapidly into the darkness of the chilly October night. Wallace Power, still clad only in his underwear and an army blanket which one of the guerrillas had given him to wear about his shoulders, was chilled through. The prisoners were solemn and in deep thought as they galloped along the unfenced road. They were thinking of their loved ones at home and the cruel fate that had befallen their neighbors and friends. Was there any possible way of escape? They were passing down a road that was bordered by a deep ravine, the slope to which was covered with thick brush. David Sanderson whispered to Captain Bence suggesting that they jump from the horse into the brush and make their escape. He was certain that they would be killed if they remained and that they should take what seemed to be their only chance. But Captain Bence, who was better schooled in the cruelties of war, understood the outlaws and knew that they were only waiting for an excuse to kill him. The ruffians were at no time more than a horse's length distant.

The guerrilla leader also seemed to be absorbed in thought. He was apparently meditating on what to do next. Suddenly he reigned his horse and took a place at the rear of the outlaws and prisoners. Riding up quietly until he was beside the horse on

which Captain Bence and David Sanderson were riding, his demeanor suddenly changed and he began to whistle. Then drawing his revolver he placed it near Captain Bence's head and fired. Both men fell from the horse at the crack of the gun. Sanderson lay on the ground as if dead, but Captain Bence, scarcely conscious of what he was doing, rose on his elbow. Again the cold-blooded assassin took deliberate aim and fired another shot into the brain of the dying man.

"Get up", he said to Sanderson scornfully. "You're not shot."

When Mr. Sanderson had scrambled to his feet he was forced to promise that he would never join the Union army or take up arms or attempt to pursue the raiders.

"Now go home, and if you look around I'll shoot you", said the guerrilla as he flourished his revolver. Mr. Sanderson started down the road, walking as fast as he could and expecting every moment to be shot, but his life was spared.

The outlaws then held a council to determine the fate of the remaining prisoners. Finally, the prisoners were ordered to dismount and a pledge was extorted from each that he would never enter the Union army nor say anything about what he had seen or heard before reaching Springville. They were formed in line and one of the guerrillas rode slowly along in front, drawing his revolver on each, and asking the leader in each case what he should

do. When asked this question concerning Wallace Power, the chief replied, "I will let him go home as I told his father I would when I released him."

Thereupon the prisoners were dismissed. They lost no time in starting for home, walking as rapidly as possible. Grateful for their unexpected escape, they could not divert their minds from the terrible deeds they had witnessed. It was about midnight when they arrived in Springville completely exhausted.

The raiders mounted their horses and soon disappeared in the darkness as they rode away into the timbered country toward Lancaster, Missouri. By the side of the road lay the body of Captain Bence where he had fallen. On his coat fluttered a slip of paper bearing the ominous legend, "James Jackson, Lieutenant Commanding, October 12th, 1864."

HERMAN H. TRACHSEL

Rivers of Iowa

Iowa River, several miles before it enters the Mississippi, has been mainly supplied by two branches of unequal length and importance. The eastern branch (which is the longer of the two) is called Red Cedar River; and its head-waters are not far from those of the Cannon River, which I have renamed the La Hontan on my map. It so happens, contrary to the received principles of descriptive geography, that Red Cedar River loses its name after emptying into the shorter branch, which maintains that of the Iowa. It is true that these names were established before it was known which of the two was the more important. To Albert M. Lea must be assigned the credit of having first laid down the course of Red Cedar River, the whole length of which is not less than three hundred and fifty miles, and which is probably navigable for one hundred and sixty miles out of these. After quitting the sandy plains of its upper reaches, it pours rapidly over a series of ledges of carboniferous limestone,

[This description of some of the geographical features of the Iowa, Cedar, Des Moines, and Mississippi rivers is adapted for THE PALIMPSEST from J. N. Nicollet's report of his explorations of the basin of the upper Mississippi River between 1838 and 1840. The report, accompanied by a splendid map, was published in 1843 as Senate Document, No. 237, 26th Congress, 2nd Session, and again in 1845 as House Document, No. 52, 28th Congress, 2nd Session.—THE EDITOR]

until it reaches a much lower level, where it deposits its many sand-bars, the soil of which is congenial to a vigorous growth of the red cedar, whence the river derives its name.

The Des Moines is one of the most beautiful and important tributaries of the Mississippi north of the Missouri; and the metamorphosis which its name has undergone from its original appellation, is curious enough to be recorded. We are informed that Father Marquette and Louis Joliet, during their voyage in search of the Mississippi, having reached the distance of sixty leagues below the mouth of the Wisconsin, observed the footsteps of men on the right side of the great river, which served as a guide for these two celebrated explorers to the discovery of an Indian trail, or path, leading to an extensive prairie, and which they determined to follow. Having proceeded about two leagues, they saw first one village on the bank of a river, and then two others upon a slope, half a league off from the first. The travellers, having halted within hailing distance, were met by the Indians, who offered them their hospitalities, and represented themselves as belonging to the Illinois nation. The name which they gave to their settlement was Mouin-gouinas, (or Moingona, as laid down in the ancient maps of the country,) and is a corruption of the Algonkin word *Mikonang*, signifying *at the road*; the Indians, by their customary elliptical manner of designating localities, alluding,

in this instance, to the well-known road in this section of country, which they used to follow between the head of the lower rapids and their settlement on the river that empties itself into the Mississippi, so as to avoid the rapids. And this is still the practice of the present inhabitants of the country.

Now, after the French had established themselves on the Mississippi, they adopted this name; but with their custom (to this day, that of the Creoles) of only pronouncing the first syllable, and applying it to the river, as well as to the Indians who dwelt upon it; so that they would say *"la rivière des Moins"* — "the river of the Moins;" *"aller chez les Moins"* — to go to the Moins (people). But, in later times, the inhabitants associated this name with that of the Trappist monks (*moines de la Trappe*) who resided on the Indian mounds of the American bottom. It was then concluded that the true reading of the *rivière des Moins* was the *"rivière des Moines,"* or river of the monks, by which name it is designated on all the modern maps.

The Des Moines empties into the Mississippi in 40° 22′ north latitude; and its sources, heretofore supposed to be in 43°, are extended on my map to 44° 3′. It is fed from the beautiful Shetek lakes, towards the middle of the plateau of the Coteau des Prairies, at an elevation of one thousand five hundred and eighty feet above the level of the sea. The waters of these lakes flow from northwest to southeast, swelling themselves by innumerable tributaries

until they enter the Mississippi at an elevation of about four hundred and forty-four feet above the Gulf of Mexico.

The course of the Des Moines cannot be less than four hundred miles; whence it would follow that the average of its descent is nearly three feet to the mile, with a current approaching in velocity that of the Missouri. The river flows constantly in a deep valley, from its sources to within a few miles of its confluence with the Mississippi, where it spreads over low grounds. In its upper part, its bed is upon sand, rolled pebbles, and shingle.

Like most of the rivers in this region, it has its sources in lakes and swampy grounds, and has a tortuous and sluggish course until it reaches a greater declivity at about 43° latitude, where it becomes much more rapid and direct, and frequently pitches impetuously over rocky beds of carboniferous limestone forming frequent bluffs on alternate sides. This rock, which might furnish an abundance of excellent building materials, is overlaid in some places by deposits of coal.

Penned up, as it were, between the valleys of the Mississippi and the Missouri, and those of their adjacent tributary streams, the Des Moines has no large tributary of its own. Flowing through a wide and deep valley, the principal waters which it receives are the drainings through deep and long ravines, intersecting its shores, and rendering travel along them inconvenient and painful. The

only tributary streams of any consequence are Raccoon Fork, and perhaps Lizard and Cedar rivers, on the right side; and Boone River and Moingonan's Brother, on the left. Yet, in the spring of the year, the Des Moines may be navigated by flatboats that would carry the produce of the upper country to the head of steamboat navigation, which may be one hundred and fifty miles from its mouth. But as my assistant, Lieutenant John C. Frémont, has made the surveys to ascertain the spot to which steamboats of different burdens may ascend from the Mississippi, I refer to his report for more ample details.

The Sioux or Ndakotah Indians call the Des Moines *Inyan-sha-sha-watpa,* or Redstone River — from *inyan,* stone; *sha-sha,* reduplication of *sha,* red; and *watpa,* river. They call the upper east fork *Inyan-sha-sha-watpa-sunkaku,* the brother of Redstone River. This is the tributary which I have precedingly called Moingonan's Brother.

The union of the Moingonan with its brother forms what is also called the upper fork. It is in the midst of a fine grove, embracing an area of several miles, with good soil and water-power. This grove will soon be the center of a populous settlement.

Whilst writing these pages, I am informed that all the lands on the Moingonan and its tributaries, below this point, have been purchased from the Sac and Fox Indians, who continue their destined west-

ward progress, closely followed by the white man, eager to possess so beautiful a country.

The hydrographical relations of the Des Moines with the Mankato, St. Peter's, and Mississippi rivers, present a geographical incident of some interest. In latitude 43° 45′, longitude 95° 12′, there is a lake very near the Des Moines River named Tchan-shetcha, or Dry Wood Lake. The Watonwan River, which is a tributary of the Mankato, that empties itself into the St. Peters, has its source in this lake. Now the tongue of land separating the Des Moines from Tchan-shetcha Lake, is not more than a mile to a mile and a half broad; so that, were a canal cut across, the waters of the Des Moines would be made to communicate with those of the St. Peter's.

The importance of this communication may be made sensible by a knowledge of the fact that the Indian traders dependent on the American Fur Company have frequently spent the winter at the headwaters of the Des Moines. On one occasion, Joseph Laframboise, failing in his means of transportation by land, had a large canoe built, which he loaded with his peltries, took water upon the Tchan-shetcha, descended the Watonwan and Mankato, and arrived safely at the St. Peter's station. I mean only to indicate at present, however, what will at a future day form an obvious feature in the system of internal improvement of these regions, so new in the geography of the United States, by which this

extensive and beautiful territory might be rendered circumnavigable. I hasten to get back to the Mississippi.

Ascending the Mississippi, the Lower or Des Moines Rapids are two hundred and four miles above St. Louis, and beyond the mouth of the Des Moines, whence they derive their name, which was given to them by the first French settlers who opened the fur trade in this part of the Mississippi Valley, long before it was known that the Des Moines had any places in its course that could be considered as rapids.

The spot at which the first difficulties in the navigation of the rapids are encountered is about three-quarters of a mile beyond Keokuk and four miles above the mouth of the Des Moines; thence the rapids ascend nearly up to Montrose, where, but a few years back, was situated Fort Des Moines, and opposite to which is Commerce, which has but lately changed its name to Nauvoo and has become a Mormon settlement.

In January, 1838, Congress ordered a survey of the rapids, which was intrusted to Captain R. E. Lee, of the corps of engineers. By his estimate, the length of the rapids is eleven miles, with a fall of twenty-four feet. Here the Mississippi tumbles over ledges of a blue limestone, at all times covered with more or less water, and through which many crooked channels have been worn by the action of the current. During low stages of the water, the

passage of the rapids is very difficult, as well in consequence of the shallowness of the water as the narrowness and tortuousness of the channel; so that the time of practicable steamboat navigation is shortened by nearly three months in the year, which is about the duration of low water in the river.

Captain Lee had commenced a system of improvements, that has, unfortunately, been suspended, to the great detriment of the country; for without the completion of such improvements as had been so judiciously devised and commenced, the immense resources of the beautiful region of country north of the rapids in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa, will remain unavailable. In the winter of 1836-'37, I was a witness that $15 were paid for flour, and $25 for barrelled pork, at St. Peter's, which at St. Louis had probably respectively cost but $5 and $8, because the steamers loaded with winter provisions had not been able to cross the rapids during the preceding fall.

The uplands that border on the rapids are based upon the mountain or carboniferous limestone, as the contained fossils indicate. The limestone, of a dirty color, and much broken up, is the matrix of numerous siliceous and calcareous geodes. Those fine geodes picked up by all travellers, are found on the banks of the rapids, having fallen from the adjoining bluffs. Within a few years there has been a road opened leading to Warsaw, and, being cut along the bluff, has exposed to view the stratum in

which the geodes occur, and their position therein. They are observed to be slightly compressed, their greater axes being parallel to the stratification of the limestone, which is horizontal.

Directly opposite the mouth of the Des Moines, partly at the foot and partly on the top of the bluff that overlooks the Mississippi, is situated the town of Warsaw. This is a very advantageous position, as it forms a natural depot for the products of the back parts of Illinois and those descending the Des Moines. Moreover, it is at Warsaw that the steamboats which can not cross the rapids stop to discharge their cargoes into keel-boats that transfer them to the steamers at the head of the rapids; the same keel-boats bringing, in return, freight for the steamboats on the descending trade.

Between the lower and upper rapids, a distance of about one hundred and thirty miles, the navigation of the Mississippi is perfectly safe. Its valley swells out considerably, especially about the confluence of the larger rivers coming from the northwest, the entrances to which are concealed by a number of low islands and sloughs, that, at some seasons, affect the salubrity of the surrounding country. Occasionally, however, the highlands approach the river, and emigrants take advantage of such positions to multiply the sites of new villages and towns.

Burlington is one of these newly-built-up towns, beautifully situated on the west bank of the Missis-

sippi, along the slope of a bluff extending northerly to the Flint River.

Upper or Rock River Rapids are so named from their proximity to the mouth of Rock River. On approaching these rapids, in the ascent of the Mississippi, there is presented to the view as beautiful a prospect as can be met with in the whole west. Rock Island comes into view covered with a most luxuriant vegetation, and made picturesque by the ruins of an old fort; whilst the town of Stephenson, and that of Davenport with the beautiful range of sloping hills in the rear of it, help to form so winning a landscape as alone to account for the rapidity with which settlements multiply in this portion of the Mississippi Valley. Other more substantial inducements, however, are offered to the immigrant in the fertile lands that extend to a considerable distance back on both shores of the river.

The length of the Rock Rapids is from fourteen to fifteen miles from Rock Island to a little below Port Byron, on the left side of the river, and Parkhurst on the right side. According to the surveys of Captain R. E. Lee, the fall of the Mississippi, from the head to the foot of the rapids, is twenty-five and three-quarters feet. The waters roll over a bed of limestone rocks, the ledges of which sometimes reach quite across, so as at low water to be very shallow; or, projecting and interlocking from opposite sides, afford nothing but winding, difficult, and dangerous channels.

The fall of the river is not regular, but, like that over the lower rapids, is, as might be expected, greater over the reefs and less in the channels; so that the velocity of the current, varying with the descent, and being continually checked by the rocky bed of the river, its tortuousness, occasioned by the projecting ledges above referred to, though not so great as the natural fall would predicate, is still rapid, and difficult to overcome. The difficulty consists mainly, however, in the short turns and narrowness of the passes between the reefs, which oblige boats to cross the current in an oblique direction, running the risk of being dashed against the rocks. As a matter of course, the descending boats, being swept along by the current, run the greatest risk. But Captain Lee has shown that it is practicable to remove these obstacles, so as to afford a safe passage up and down both of the rapids.

The general government is certainly interested in hastening these projected improvements, having considerable supplies to send annually to the already established military posts of Prairie du Chien, St. Peter's, and others that will probably soon be required. Improvements in the navigability of the Mississippi will also facilitate future transactions with the Indians, which the onward march of events so plainly indicates must, of necessity, take place before long.

J. N. Nicollet

Comment by the Editor

JEAN NICHOLAS NICOLLET

Impelled by the ambition to write a "Physical History of the Valley of the Mississippi", Jean Nicholas Nicollet left his position in the French government bureau of longitudes and came to America in 1832 — almost two centuries after his predecessor, Jean Nicolet, had returned to Quebec from Green Bay with the amazing news that he had been within three days' journey of a great water which he thought was the China Sea. Meanwhile missionaries, traders, adventurers, and official explorers had traversed the length and breadth of the Mississippi Valley in quest of fortunes, glory, religious converts, or scientific data. Yet the geographical knowledge of the great valley, particularly the region west of the river, remained vague and inaccurate.

In the prime of his maturity, J. N. Nicollet was eminently qualified to perform the work he contemplated. Educated in his native province of Savoy, he had become assistant in mathematics at Chambery when he was only nineteen. In 1817 he had been appointed secretary and librarian of the observatory in Paris, where he studied astronomy with Laplace.

For five years he conducted his explorations, which extended from the Alleghany Mountains to the Red River of Texas, and from the delta of the Mississippi to its source in Lake Itasca. Then in 1838 the Bureau of Topographical Engineers in the War Department selected him to make a thorough survey of the hydrographical basin of the upper Mississippi River and prepare a large-scale map based upon exact astronomical and barometrical observations. Assisted by Lieutenant John C. Frémont and a staff of scientists, he explored the Territory of Iowa during the years 1838, 1839, and 1840. It was by far the most thorough and scientific work that had been done in that region, and the map which he produced is still regarded as a masterpiece of cartography.

Ill health caused him to curtail his report in explanation of the map, but it is nevertheless one of the most substantial contributions to the early history and geography of the Iowa country. Death came to the distinguished geographer in Washington on September 11, 1843, just before his map and report were published.

J. E. B.

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